

Two Industrial Loads On Hot

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Two Industrial Loads On Hot

by [jedusaur](#)

Summary

Frank works the overnight shift at the laundromat, partially because it's easier to push prescription painkillers on the side in the middle of the night, but mostly because there are fewer disapproving old people around to tattle on him for playing The Floor Is Lava on the washing machines.

Notes

Happy birthday, Hayley! Well, it's not yet for me, but it's been your birthday in your time zone for almost a whole hour SO I'M POSTING.

(Thank you to Verbyna for the beta!)

A podfic of this fic by xojemmaxo can be found [here](#).

Frank works the overnight shift at the laundromat, partially because it's easier to push prescription painkillers on the side in the middle of the night, but mostly because there are fewer disapproving old people around to tattle on him for playing The Floor Is Lava on the washing machines. The rows are spaced out perfectly--close enough to jump, but far enough apart that he's never quite sure he isn't about to miss the edge and crash to the floor. It's happened a few times, fortunately never with a customer around. Once he tried to call in incinerated the next day. Ray, his manager, was highly unamused.

Frank earns nine dollars and sixty-four cents an hour, a fourteen-cent raise from his starting pay. He knows perfectly well that only employees who consistently follow the code of conduct are supposed to get six-month wage increases, and he and Ray both know perfectly well that Frank spent his first three shifts systematically breaking every single one of the rules posted on the wall in the break room. But Frank is a sneaky bastard and Ray has no proof of anything, and nobody makes the kind of detergent sales Frank makes, so he got his raise anyway.

Not that nine dollars and anything an hour comes close to what he rakes in selling pills during work hours. Most aspiring dealers fuck up in one of two ways: either they're not careful enough and the wrong people find out, or they're too careful and not enough of the right people do. But Frank's connections are solid, both the buyers he's racked up from his time in the scene and the suppliers he carefully woos every time he ends up in the hospital. There's always someone down the hall who'd rather have ten bucks than a tab of hydrocodone, and Frank can turn that into fifty, easy.

The laundromat is the perfect rendezvous point. There's a built-in excuse for loitering, and Frank works alone. He's supposed to have someone working with him to cover during his state-mandated breaks, but Ray just tells him to turn the "Open" sign on the door around to the "Back At" side with the little clock with plastic hands if he needs a break.

Frank doesn't usually bother. It's not like the job is all that strenuous. He doesn't really need a break from sitting on his ass behind the counter in order to sit on his ass in the back room. If he spots someone he's not fond of approaching, sometimes he flips the sign and locks up for fifteen minutes just to make them wait, but most of the time he spends his whole shift in the front.

He works Sunday/Mondays to Thursday/Fridays, ten PM to six AM. Ray takes over from him in the mornings, and Mikey has the evening shift. Some college kids Frank doesn't know handle weekends--Ray doubles them up in the hopes that perhaps two college students might combine to form one functioning brain. Frank, who has been to college and met college students, is skeptical.

It's not the most high-status of jobs, but Frank is happy with it. He's up all night anyway. There aren't many people who wash clothes in the middle of the night, and those who do generally don't need his help operating the machines, so he mostly hangs around drinking rum out of Coke cans and playing sideways horseshoe with the clothes hangers. It's pretty sweet.

Frank's favorite customer by far is the adorable guy who shows up every few weeks with two bulging trash bags of

clothes and washes them in the giant industrial machines by the window. He sits with his back against the wall, as far away as it's possible to get from the counter where Frank hangs out, and he spends the time doing something involving a notebook. Frank's not sure whether he's writing or drawing; he's never managed to get close enough to get a good look.

The guy's name is Gerard, which Frank knows because of the one conversation they've had. It began with Gerard asking why Frank was jumping on the washing machines, and ended when Gerard's laundry buzzed thirty seconds later and he dumped it all back into his trash bags and skidded out the door. It wasn't much of a chat, but it got Frank a name and a confirmation that the guy is exactly as much of a dork as he looks.

Frank kind of wants to keep him.

The next time Gerard comes in, Frank sneaks up the next row in an attempt to spring over the machines and find out what's going on in that book. Unfortunately, the jumbo machines are about five feet tall, and while Frank *is* taller than that, fuck you very much Gabe, he's not tall enough to clear them without making enough of a racket to warn Gerard of his presence. By the time he sticks his head out over the top of the machine, Gerard has closed his notebook and is peering up like he's afraid the washer is about to topple over onto him.

"Sup," says Frank.

"Um, hi," says Gerard.

"I was trying to peek at your book," explains Frank.

"Oh," says Gerard. "It's kind of private."

"Right," Frank says. "That's why I was trying to peek, instead of asking." He's nothing if not up-front about the fact that he can be an asshole sometimes.

Gerard grins, which makes him look twice as dorky and about five times as cute. This may be a problem. Frank does not generally go for guys who look like they belong in a crossover spinoff of The Addams Family and The Big Bang Theory. Frank goes for guys who deepthroat, swallow, and don't expect to stay the night.

This dude looks like he would stay the night, snuggling the entire time, and then attempt to make breakfast in the morning, and then burn it beyond recognition, and then insist on paying at IHOP to make up for the smoke alarm. And hold hands across the table in public. And probably request a whipped cream smiley face on his pancakes.

Frank scoots up to sit on the edge of the washer and dangles one leg down to nudge at the notebook. "You've always got your nose in there. I'm curious."

Gerard bats his foot away. "I don't even know you. Do you always watch people while they do laundry? That's creepy."

"It's my job to keep an eye on you," Frank says, unrepentant. "Make sure you don't fuck up the machines or steal clothes hangers or some shit. Anyway, it's your own fault for being all interesting with your secret book and your air of mystery. C'mon, give me a hint."

"No." Gerard clutches the notebook to his chest, smiling and doing that glancing-through-eyelashes thing chicks do when they're looking to score. Frank considers trying for tonight, but he's got three more hours of his shift left. Besides, if this is going to be a mornings-after-at-IHOP sort

of relationship, he wants a little more basis for it than a conversation and a half before diving in.

He hops down to the floor and walks backwards to the service counter, aiming two fingers at his eyes and then at Gerard, who pointedly opens his notebook where Frank can't see it.

Frank spends the rest of his shift thinking about the last time he bothered to have actual conversations with someone before fucking them, and how disastrous that turned out. By the time Ray shows up at six, he's pretty much decided *fuck it, bring on the pancakes*.

Gabe careens through the door, yelling at Frank. "Am I late? Did I miss it?"

"Jeez, check if there's people in here before you start hollering," says Frank. The laundromat is in fact entirely empty, but he's pretty sure Gabe didn't bother to make sure of that. "Nope, there's still two left."

"That is excellent news, because Billvy's right behind me." Gabe turns around. "Somewhere behind me. Possibly not directly behind."

"Did he bring any clothes to wash?" Frank requires all customers to actually use the laundromat, for the sake of plausible deniability. Middle of the night or not, having people come in here without laundry all the time looks sketchy.

"Oh, shit," says Gabe, and immediately begins to strip.

Bill shows up a minute later. Gabe, down to his underwear, jumps on him and starts pulling off his clothes too. Bill submits to this treatment until Gabe reaches for the button of his jeans, at which point he groans and says, "Let me have my pants, okay?"

"Oh, now you want to keep them on," Gabe teases, but he turns his attention to tugging off Bill's shoes and retrieving his socks. He sticks the whole armful in the nearest washing machine and roots around in Bill's pocket for a handful of quarters.

"That's not anywhere near a whole load," says Frank.

Gabe ignores him, busy at the detergent dispenser. "He said there's two," he tells Bill over his shoulder. "Wanna turn the crank for yours?"

Bill has that look on his face, the one Gabe's friends always have. "It's cool," he says. "Crank away."

The machine spits out two little boxes. Gabe shakes them, listening. "This one's yours," he says, tossing Bill one of them.

"Dude!" Bill protests. "Cheating!"

Gabe is already opening up his box and happily digging out two tabs of tramadol from the powdered soap. "You should turn the crank for yours next time," he says, and cracks up. "Just playing, hey, I'll share. Here, this one's for you." He sticks one into Bill's pocket, then goes to put the other one in his own and bumps up against his boxer-briefs.

Bill rescues it before Gabe tries to wedge it in the waistband. "I'll keep that safe for you," he says, grinning. "Go start the laundry."

Frank does this twice a week, a little detergent lottery with the cheaper stuff. Most people bring their own detergent, and if any normal laundromat customers try to use the machine, Frank just claims it's broken and gives them a box from behind the counter. It's fun, and it gets people to come in, which tends to lead to more sales. Ray is entirely bewildered by the amount of laundry soap Frank sells. It's hilarious.

Gabe starts the pitiful semi-load of laundry and hops up to sit on top of the washer. "Billvy Billiam Billy Bill Bill," he chants, kicking his bare heels against the machine. "I'm bored, let's take those now."

"Or you could save them for later and try something else," says Frank. He pulls out his handy little blue plastic seven-day pill organizer and rattles it tantalizingly.

Gabe lights up. He bats his eyelashes at Bill, who is clearly the only one of them who brought his wallet. Bill glances at the washing machine, which has just finished the initial fill and is starting to agitate, and sighs. "What's in there today?"

Frank flips open a couple of lids with his thumbs like a businessman unlatching a briefcase. He can tell he's already got the sale.

Mikey doesn't usually stay very long after Frank shows up. Frank doesn't take it personally--he knows how it feels to be at the end of an eight-hour stretch of work. Sometimes the prospect of two more minutes under the fluorescent lights feels like torture. So he's surprised when he gets to work one day and Mikey sticks around for the first fifteen minutes of his shift, casually chatting with him.

Eventually Mikey notices his confusion. "Sorry for hanging around so long," he says. "I dropped my house key down a storm drain and my brother's supposed to come by with his spare. I was just going to go to his place, but he told me he'd meet me here. It's weird, he usually never leaves the house if he can help it."

A few minutes later, Gerard walks in. Frank has never seen Gerard before two AM before, but that puzzle solves itself when he comes to the back and hands Mikey a key.

"Oh hey, you're Mikey's brother?" Frank says.

Mikey raises an eyebrow. "You know Frank?"

"Kind of," says Gerard. He smiles shyly at Frank.

"Dude's always in here at ass in the morning using both of the industrial machines," says Frank.

"Ah." Mikey looks like he's suppressing a smirk. "So that's why you made me wait around for my key. Asshole."

He wanders out the door without saying goodbye to either of them. Frank is about to try for another conversation, but Gerard's face has gone impressively red, and he scampers after his brother with an awkward attempt at a backwards wave.

Frank can see him bitching out Mikey in the parking lot a minute later. He doesn't even notice himself laughing until he realizes people are looking at him funny.

There's a guy over by the vending machines who can't stop twitching, and it's driving Frank up the fucking wall.

There's a textbook spread across his knees and a pile of index cards next to him, but he hasn't turned a page or picked up a card in twenty minutes. He keeps staring off into space, periodically jerking his attention back to the page and then drifting away again seconds later. He keeps looking over at the washing machine containing his laundry like he's eager for it to finish, but he jumps when it buzzes.

"You look like you could use some Adderall, my friend," says Frank.

The guy looks up from the basket he's filling with wet clothes. "Holy hell, you have no idea. Do you have any?"

"Maybe," says Frank cautiously. He tries to pick up clients through word-of-mouth rather than randomly like this--it's easier to know who to trust that way.

The guy abandons his laundry. "Oh man, please please please. I'll--fuck, I don't have any cash." He roots through his pockets. "I have six quarters for the dryer. I'll line-dry, that shit's good for the environment."

"Yeah, no," says Frank. He has definitely not gotten this far in life charging a buck fifty for drugs.

"Is there an ATM around here? Or, or anything else I could give you?" He's biting his lip, leaning forward onto his elbows on the counter.

"Seriously?" Frank says, incredulous. He's never paid for sex, but he's pretty sure the going rate is more than the street value of Adderall.

"Seriously. I'm so fucked on this test tomorrow, I will blow you right here and now."

Well, Frank hasn't gotten laid in a while, and the dude is hot enough. "Sure, why not. Not, like, *right* here, though. Give me a sec." He goes up to the front door and flips the "Back At" sign around, not bothering to adjust the plastic hands to the correct time.

"What's your name?" he asks as he leads the guy to the break room. He doesn't usually care when it comes to hookups, but he does try to keep track of his customers, and it sounds like this dude might come back for more.

"Pete." He doesn't sound nervous, which is good. Virgins can be awesome for buttsex, but Frank prefers not to put his dick near inexperienced teeth.

Out of sight of the windows, on his knees, Pete makes it very clear that he is not in any way a virgin. There are no teeth involved, nor does there seem to be much breathing on his part, which might be a problem for him if Frank lasted longer than three minutes. It's definitely worth the Adderall, which Frank gets free anyway.

Pete stands up grinning, obviously proud of himself. Frank forks over the goods and heads up front. He's still zipping up his pants when he comes into view of the windows. Where Gerard is standing, hugging a smaller-than-usual trash bag to his chest and staring right at Frank.

That's kind of strange. Gerard just did his monthly megawash of everything he owns a week ago. Frank unlocks the door, turning the sign back around.

"Hi," says Gerard, a little uncertainly, as he comes in.

"Hey. Sorry about that. Break time, no one else to hold down the fort."

"It's okay." Gerard follows him to the back of the room and busies himself at one of the normal-sized machines. Frank has never seen him venture further than fifteen feet from the door before--this is excellent progress.

He watches Gerard fumble around with the machine for quite a bit longer than necessary before finally winding down and leaning awkwardly against it. He has his notebook, but he doesn't open it. He looks like he's trying to get up the nerve to spit something out, but then he glances at Pete and doesn't say anything.

"We should go out to dinner sometime," says Frank, although he didn't actually mean to say that at all. He's never done the dating thing, ever, and it strikes him as a spectacularly inefficient method of getting to know someone. But for some reason, he feels like he should try to do this right. And if the look on Gerard's face is any indication, he made the right call.

"That'd be fucking awesome," says Gerard. "But you... I mean, are you..." He glances at Pete, who's spread out with his homework on the other side of the room.

"What?" says Frank. "No, dude, I just met him like ten minutes ago. No worries."

"Oh."

Shit, that made Frank sound like a total slut, which he basically is. He hopes Gerard isn't about to demand STD test results or something. Not that Frank really thinks he has the balls for that, but he probably has the balls to say no to a date.

Gerard doesn't say no. He says, "Saturday?"

Gerard comes in at four in the morning on Friday with an even smaller load of laundry. He sets it down on a machine and comes all the way to the counter to flirt with Frank, which is so awesome that Frank doesn't notice him sticking a quarter in the detergent machine until it's too late to stop him.

It's too much to hope that it might not be the money box. Frank still crosses his fingers, but it's no good. He can see Gerard stop dead when he opens the box and looks inside.

He comes back to the counter, sets it down, and says in a tone Frank has never heard before, "You want to tell me why there's oxy in my soap?"

It should be a good sign that he recognizes the drug from the imprint, but his expression is anything but good. Frank cringes.

It's not really a breakup, since they were never actually together. It's just another conversation, a clearing of the air, a clarification that yes, Frank deals, and no, Gerard is not able to handle that. He doesn't say why, but it's not hard to guess.

It's better that this is happening now, Frank thinks as he watches Gerard pick up his trash bag and plod out the door. Wouldn't want to get too emotionally invested.

He doesn't realize until after Gerard is long gone that the notebook is still lying there.

Pete comes in a few days later and says, "I brought money this time!"

"Tough shit," says Frank. "Today the only forms of payment I'm accepting are traveler's checks, yen, and oral sex."

After a month and a half of no Gerard, Frank accepts that he's not coming back and gives the notebook to Mikey.

"Did you look inside?" Mikey asks as he takes it.

"No," says Frank.

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